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AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 15861

GENEVA FOR CSCE DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: GENSCHER'S HARD TIMES: THE FRG FOREIGN
MINISTER AFTER FOUR MONTHS

REF: BONN 14819

1. SUMMARY. TO COMPLEMENT OUR ASSESSMENT OF CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT AFTER FOUR MONTHS IN OFFICE (REFTEL), WE HAVE TAKEN A SIMILAR LOOK AT HANS-DIETRICH GENSCHER, THE COALITION VICE CHANCELLOR, FDP CHAIRMAN AND FOREIGN MINISTER. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT IN ALL THREE POSITIONS, GENSCHER IS EXPERIENCING FAIRLY SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES FOR THE SAME BASIC REASON--THE FACT THAT HE HAS BEEN COMPLETELY OVERSHADOWED BY CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT. END SUMMARY

2. GENSCHER'S LARGEST PROBLEM IS HELMUT SCHMIDT. THE LATTER OVERSHADOWS GENSCHER IN EVERY CONCEIVABLE WAY. SCHMIDT GETS THE HEADLINES, MAKES THE BIG DECISIONS (EVEN IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS) AND CONSCIOUSLY AIMS AT, AND SUCCEEDS IN CATCHING THE PUBLIC EYE AS GERMANY'S LEADING POLITICAL FIGURE. GENSCHER IS AWARE OF THIS AND HAS BEEN SEEKING, SO FAR TO LITTLE AVAIL, FOR WAYS TO BUILD UP AN INDEPENDENT AND ATTRACTIVE IMAGE OF HIS OWN. ONE OF OUR RELIABLE CONTACTS HAS TOLD US THAT GENSCHER RECENTLY SOLICITED VIEWS FROM TRUSTED COLLEAGUES AS TO HOW HE MIGHT PROJECT HIMSELF IN THE PUBLIC SCENE MORE EFFECTIVELY. WE ARE UNAWARE OF THE ANSWER HE RECEIVED, BUT WE EXPECT HIM INCREASINGLY TO TRY TO FIND POSITIONS AND STANCES IN THE PERIOD AHEAD THAT WILL PUT A CERTAIN DISTANCE BETWEEN HIM AND SCHMIDT AND GIVE HIM A PROFILE OF HIS OWN. TO HELP PUT ACROSS A MORE ATTRACTIVE PHYSICAL IMAGE, GENSCHER HAS IN RECENT MONTHS DROPPED TWENTY POUNDS FROM HIS ORIGINAL PLUMPNESS, BUT HE STILL DOES NOT COME ACROSS WELL IN
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PUBLIC APPEARANCES. HE IS STOLID, WORKMANLIKE--AND A BIT BORING. TO SOME EXTENT BOTH SCHMIDT AND GENSCHER ARE CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH: THEY ARE TOUGH, PRAGMATIC, HARD-HEADED POLITICIANS, BUT SCHMIDT APPEARS BY FAR THE MORE DYNAMIC, DECISIVE, INTELLIGENT AND ATTRACTIVE OF THE TWO. NO PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES BY GENSCHER ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE THIS FACT OF LIFE.

3. SCHMIDT IS, OF COURSE, NOT GENSCHER'S ONLY PROBLEM. HIS ROLE AS FDP CHAIRMAN CARRIES ITS OWN DIFFICULTIES. GENSCHER EMERGED FROM LAST WEEK'S PARTY CONGRESS IN HAMBURG AS THE PARTY'S LEADER, BUT CLEARLY NOT NEARLY AS WIDELY ACCEPTED AS FORMER CHAIRMAN SCHEEL HAD BEEN IN PREVIOUS YEARS. GENSCHER WAS OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY AT THE RELATIVELY POOR SUPPORT HE RECEIVED FROM THE PARTY RANK AND FILE IN HAMBURG, WHERE HE MANAGED TO COME UP WITH LESS THAN THREE-FOURTHS OF THE DELEGATES TO VOTE FOR HIM AS CHAIRMAN. THIS LESS THAN RESOUNDING EXPRESSION OF BACKING REFLECTED A SOMEWHAT HO-HUM ATTITUDE AND SOME REAL OPPOSITION TOWARD GENSCHER PERSONALLY. BESIDES HIS "IMAGE" PROBLEMS, HE LACKS THE INTEGRATIVE ABILITIES OF SCHEEL AND HAS BEEN UNABLE TO PULL TOGETHER THE SHARPLY DIFFERING GROUPINGS WITHIN THE FDP.

4. GENSCHER PROBABLY ALSO VIEWS THE ELECTION IN HAMBURG OF HANS FRIDERICH AS VICE-CHAIRMAN WITH SOME

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MISGIVINGS. FRIDERICH'S HAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST EFFECTIVE PUBLIC IMAGE AMONG THE FDP LEADERS, AND GENSCHER MUST FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH SUCH A POWERFUL COLLEAGUE, WIDELY REGARDED AS THE "CROWN PRINCE", SITTING IN SUCH PROXIMITY. WHEN ONE ADDS THE FACT THAT FRIDERICH'S, AS ECONOMICS MINISTER, IS APT TO HAVE AN EVEN STRONGER PUBLIC PROFILE IN COMING MONTHS AS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS CONTINUE TO DOMINATE THE NEWS, THIS PARTICULAR PROBLEM WILL LIKELY ASSUME INCREASING IMPORTANCE.

5. GENSCHER'S PROBLEMS ARE COMPOUNDED, ABOVE ALL, BY HIS LACK OF CONTROL OVER THE FORMATION OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY. DESPITE HIS POSITION AS FOREIGN MINISTER, HE CAN BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS THAT HE IS FULLY IN CHARGE OF HIS AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. IN THE FRG'S WESTPOLITIK, U.S.-POLITIK, AND EVEN IN OSTPOLITIK, HELMUT SCHMIDT IS MAKING THE RUNNING. GENSCHER OFTEN IS NOT EVEN CONSULTED ABOUT MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY MOVES (E.G., THE FRG'S 2 BILLION DOLLAR LOAN TO ITALY, OR THE FRG'S INITIAL DECISION TO BLOCK THE PROPOSED FIVE PERCENT INCREASE IN EC FARM PRICES). HE KNOWS THAT

SCHMIDT, WITH HIS LONG EXPERIENCE IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MONETARY FIELDS AND HIS NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS, ON OCCASION CONDUCTS A PERSONALIZED DIPLOMACY OF HIS OWN THAT QUITE IGNORES GENSCHER AND HIS FOREIGN OFFICE.

6. GENSCHER IS, ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES, EXTREMELY IRRITATED BY HIS SEEMING POWERLESSNESS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY AREA. HE IS AWARE THAT THE LARGER NATO ALLIES, AS WELL AS THE SOVIETS, WOULD MUCH RATHER DEAL WITH THE POWERFUL CHANCELLOR THAN THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON IMPORTANT ISSUES. THE SOVIETS IN PARTICULAR HAVE MADE NO SECRET THAT THEY CONSIDER GENSCHER A LIGHTWEIGHT AS WELL AS DIFFICULT, AND THAT THEY INTEND TO CONFIDENTIAL

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DEAL WITH SCHMIDT ON MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE. GENSCHER HAS COMPLAINED TO SCHMIDT, WE ARE TOLD, AND THERE ARE SIGNS THAT SCHMIDT IS WILLING TO MAKE A FEW GESTURES TOWARDS GENSCHER. THUS SCHMIDT IS GOING TO MOSCOW WITH GENSCHER IN TOW, WHEREAS SCHMIDT ORIGINALLY THOUGHT OF GOING WITHOUT HIM, IF WE ARE TO BELIEVE SOME USUALLY RELIABLE CONTACTS. AND SCHMIDT HAS MADE NOISES ABOUT STRENGTHENING THE EC COUNCIL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS, A PROPOSAL THAT WOULD, IF CARRIED OUT, ENHANCE GENSCHER'S ROLE, AT LEAST OPTICALLY. WHETHER THESE GESTURES WILL HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT IS, OF COURSE, OPEN TO QUESTION. SCHMIDT SEEMS TO US TOO SET IN HIS WAYS TO ALLOW GENSCHER MUCH OF A ROLE IN AN AREA IN WHICH SCHMIDT FEELS HIMSELF MORE COMPETENT THAN HIS FOREIGN MINISTER.

7. WITHAL, ONE CANNOT WRITE GENSCHER OFF COMPLETELY. HE IS A TOUGH, SHREWD AND AMBITIOUS POLITICO, STILL ONLY 46 YEARS OLD. MANY OF THE PROBLEMS HE IS NOW FACING ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE THAT CONFRONTED SCHEEL IN 1969, WHEN SCHEEL TOO WAS THOUGHT NO MATCH FOR BRANDT, BAHR AND COMPANY. IN HIS OWN WAY, LARGELY THROUGH HIS WIDE PERSONAL APPEAL TO THE GERMAN PUBLIC, SCHEEL OVERCAME MANY OF HIS POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES, EVEN THOUGH HE REMAINED TO THE INITIATE SOMETHING OF A LIGHTWEIGHT FOREIGN MINISTER OVERSHADOWED BY BRANDT. GENSCHER, THOUGH LACKLUSTER AND LACKING SCHEEL'S NATURAL POLITICAL ABILITY AND POPULARITY, MAY THROUGH SHEER HARD WORK COME ALSO TO THE POINT OF BEING RESPECTED BOTH IN BONN AND ABROAD. HE HAS WON THE GRUDGING RESPECT OF THE FONOFF PROFESSIONALS BY HIS DILIGENCE, HIS WILLINGNESS TO LEARN AND HIS ABILITY TO TAKE DECISIONS. BUT HE HAS A HARD ROAD AHEAD, NOT LEAST BECAUSE HELMUT SCHMIDT IS NOT WILLY BRANDT. SCHMIDT'S FORCEFUL LEADERSHIP AND HIS PRAGMATIC, NATIONAL AND SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE

APPROACH HAVE TENDED TO CUT THE GROUND FROM UNDER
GENSCHER AND THE FDP IN POLICY TERMS, BOTH FOREIGN AND
DOMESTIC.

8. THE QUESTION ARISES AS TO WHETHER GENSCHER MAY NOT
AT SOME POINT CONSIDER PULLING THE FDP OUT OF THE
COALITION SHOULD HIS POSITION APPEAR TO HIM UNTENABLE.
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WE THINK HE IS VERY FAR FROM THAT POINT YET. SUCH A
MAJOR STEP WOULD PROBABLY TEAR APART HIS PARTY, ALREADY
FAR FROM UNIFIED. CERTAINLY HE MUST KNOW THAT THE
YOUTH AND PROGRESSIVE WINGS OF HIS PARTY, WHICH ARE
CLOSER TO THE SPD, WOULD NOT SWALLOW A MOVE TO COALESCE
WITH THE CDU/CSU WITHOUT A TREMENDOUS FIGHT.
WHETHER HE COULD SURVIVE SUCH A SWITCH IS PROBLEMATICAL.

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SO, FOR THE TIME BEING, GENSCHER PROBABLY CONSIDERS THAT THE PRESENT STATUS QUO IS ABOUT THE BEST HE CAN HOPE FOR. THERE ARE VOICES IN THE FDP, HOWEVER, THAT KEEP TALKING ABOUT THE PARTY'S HOLDING ITS OPTIONS OPEN FOR 1976: SCHMIDT CANNOT ASSUME THAT CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT COALITION IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

9. WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF ALL THIS ON US-GERMAN RELATIONS"? THE ANSWER IS A QUALIFIED "NOT MUCH". SCHMIDT IS THE MAN WE WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH ON ALL MAJOR QUESTIONS AFFECTING OUR INTERESTS IN GERMANY AND, TO THE DEGREE HE SPEAKS FOR WESTERN EUROPE (AS INCREASINGLY HE SEEMS TO BE WILLING TO TRY TO DO), IN EUROPE AS A WHOLE. BUT GENSCHER IS ALSO LIKELY TO REMAIN FOREIGN MINISTER. HE IS WELL-DISPOSED TOWARD THE U.S. AND FULLY UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE TO GERMANY OF OUR SECURITY ROLE IN EUROPE. HE CAN BE HELPFUL BILATERALLY AND IN BROADER TERMS. ANYTHING WE CAN DO, THEREFORE, TO BOLSTER HIS CONFIDENCE AND POSITION WITHOUT GIVING OFFENSE TO SCHMIDT WILL BE IN OUR INTEREST. GENSCHER'S

RECENT VISIT TO THE U.S., WHERE HE MET AND TALKED WITH
THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY KISSINGER, WAS A CLEAR SUC-
CESS IN THIS REGARD. WE BELIEVE SCHMIDT UNDERSTANDS
THE NATURE OF ANY GESTURES WE MAKE TOWARD GENSCHER
DURING SUCH VISITS AND OTHER OCCASIONS: THESE GESTURES
DO NOT ALTER THE BASIC POWER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
TWO MEN NOR DO THEY IN ANY WAY ALTER THE DOMINANT ROLE
OF SCHMIDT, AS BOTH MEN ARE WELL AWARE.
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